

HUIS CLOS

a project by Magali Arriola

Opening: Thursday, September 16th 2010
September 2010 - December 2010

mario garcía torres
peter nadin
roman ondák
mungo thomson

The Elba Benitez Gallery is pleased to launch the new season with the exhibition *Huis Clos*, guest curated by Magali Arriola, chief curator at the Rufino Tamayo Museum in Mexico City. *Huis Clos* also initiates a series of innovative exhibitions that, by actively examining the exhibition model itself, will allow the Elba Benitez Gallery to develop a more flexible and dynamic gallery practice in keeping with the vanguard work created by the gallery's artists.

Taking its title from Jean-Paul Sartre's landmark 1944 work of existentialist theater, *Huis Clos* presents a group of art works that provoke a re-thinking of the delicate and complex relation between art objects and the space in which they are exhibited. Conceptually structured around the dichotomy between presence and absence, *Huis Clos* consists of four radically dematerialized pieces -- three contemporary, and one historical -- all of which combine a certain degree of playfulness with a more critical scrutiny of the role of exhibitions in the commodification process of art works.

As the earliest work in the exhibition, Peter Nadin's 2010 *In The Name Of The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost* harks back to a different era -- specifically, to New York City in the late 1970's, when the exhausted ideals of the 1960's converged with the economic doldrums of the period -- that has become a subject of research and source of inspiration for many contemporary artists. *In The Name Of The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost* involves the labor involved in sanding and re-painting the gallery walls in preparation for the exhibition, so that the ephemeral finished work consists of those walls themselves during the duration of the exhibition. As a result, while no single object can be isolated as the work per se, *In The Name Of The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost* permeates and subtly alters the totality of the exhibition space and of all that exists and occurs within it.

Mungo Thomson's 2004 *Pushpin* offers an ideal counterpart to Nadin's historical work while making a wry commentary in its own right on how art works are presented and perceived. *Pushpin*, as its name suggests, consists of ceramic replica of a pushpin fastened onto the gallery wall. While pushpins are functional objects, designed to sustain other objects, Thomson's *Pushpin* holds up nothing, thus shifting the viewer's focus in two directions at once: toward the objective reality of the support mechanisms themselves -- the wall and the pushpin -- and also toward the realm of artistic possibility of all that 'might be'.

Roman Ondák's *Untitled (Post-It)* from 2005 also uses what is present to point toward what is missing, although Ondák's work extends this process from the physical into the temporal plane. The work consists of a post-it sticker on which is written the phrase "Deadline postponed until tomorrow" and attached to one of the walls of the gallery. The work thus confronts the viewer with a paradox that combines the promise of relief (an extended deadline) with the threat of a Sisyphean torture (that deadline's never being met.)

Paradox also underlies Mario Garcia Torres's elusive 2005 *Untitled (Missing Piece)*. The work appears not in the gallery's spaces but rather exclusively on the exhibition checklist -- a kind of site-within-a-site that, while not technically part of the exhibition space, is in fact a crucial functional element within the overall exhibition process. With this simple conceptual gesture, *Untitled (Missing Piece)* raises a series of practical issues that are extraneous to the art object yet central to artistic practice today, such as documentation, official validation, certifiable identity and even historical verification -- all via a work which proudly announces itself as 'missing.'

With *Huis Clos*, the Elba Benitez Gallery enters a period of research, reflection and experimentation with regard to its exhibition program. Many of the artists who show in the gallery create work that does not easily conform to conventional exhibition models. In an attempt to better serve its artists and to facilitate a greater understanding of their work, during the coming season the Elba Benitez Gallery will adapt the parameters of each exhibition to the artist's work, rather than vice-versa. Ultimately, the Elba Benitez Gallery aims to arrive at a flexible yet sustainable exhibition model that is able to provide an operative platform and optimal conditions for the display and reception of the art of our time -- and in the process, as Peter Nadin announced when first exhibiting *In The Name Of The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost* in 1978, "to alter or refurbish existing structures as a means of surviving in a capitalist economy."

Galería Elba Benítez

2010 - 2011 Season

September 2010 - December 2010: Huis Clos
January 2011 - February 2011: Carlos Garaicoa
March, April and May 2011: Cabello/Carceller
June 2011 - July 2011: Joachim Koester